DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 162 684 JC 780 604

AUTHOR Marsee, Stuart E.
TITLE Some Thoughts about Leadership.
PUB DATE Jan 79
NOTE 8p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Personnel; College Administration; Community Colleges; *Interprofessional Relationship; *Junior Colleges; *Leadership; *Leadership Qualities; Leadership Responsibility; Leadership Styles; Management; Presidents; Teacher Administrator Relationship

ABSTRACT

The administrator must learn to organize personnel and to delegate responsibilities with commensurate authority while maintaining an impersonal yet friendly, approachable, consistent, and fair manner. Recognizing that even the best administrator is prone to make some mistakes and that he cannot satisfy everyone all the time is also important. The best administrator makes the ideas of others work more often than creating them. Suggestions to administrators for improving communication include: listen more carefully; be available; never hesitate to ask for advice; welcome sincere criticism; involve others in decision-making; utilize the abilities of the total staff; minimize the levels of administration and supervision; involve faculty in curriculum development; and provide the opportunity for the one who asks a question to also propose a solution. Good administrations result from pride in accomplishments but with the full realization that perfection is constantly sought and never attained. (MB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED162684

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT LEADERSHIP

by Stuart E. Marsee
President, El Camino College
January 1979

JC 780 604

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Stuart E. Marsee

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT LEADERSHIP

Stuart E. Marsee
President, El Camino College
January 1979

It was a Friday morning. The faculty had been enjoying vacation for a week, but the president's office had continued as usual. Kissing his wife goodbye before leaving for work the president said, "When I come back to earth the next time around, I hope I am a teacher." His wife replied, "You had your chance and you 'goofed'."

Reflecting upon the past thirty-two years of administrative and staff assignments and of only occasional part-time teaching, the president offers the following observations to potential leaders in the field of education.

Upon being recommended to the board of trustees for his first administrative position, the young administrator was shown "his bill of particulars". He was not flattered by what seemed to be undue emphasis on physical and mental health. However, he is now of the opinion that, if anything, the importance of these features was underestimated.

A normal, healthy individual learns to live with his fears, frustrations, reversals and pressures of work. Much emotional hazard can be avoided by the administrator if he can foresee and forestall fatigue by restraining from involvement in excesses that result in poor health. One's participation in all available events is not always as important as one might think. One's health, both mental and physical, must be respected.

Lack of organization is one of the weaknesses in administration. The administrator must learn to organize personnel for line and staff functions and to delegate responsibility with commensurate authority. To fail to do this will result in the absorption of his vitality for things that can be done as well or better by others. He must give his leadership to matters for which his position and his particular abilities count the most.

The leader is often a lonely person. Respect for an individual as a friend often blinds one to this friend's shortcomings. Even those who are not close friends with the leader generally accept personnel decisions affecting them as a personal rebuke. It is necessary that an administrator who wishes to maintain good judgment acquire as impersonal a manner as possible. He must be friendly, approachable, consistent and fair, but he makes a poor "chum". It is very difficult to hurt a good friend--a duty no one wishes to do.

Before becoming an administrator many instructors, and especially those who are popular with their peers, believe they can avoid the image of "bossism". A leader cannot avoid this curse which comes with the exercise of authority. Displeasure and often hostility can be expected from those who would have had you take a different course. But the policies and practices of an organization must be administered so that treatment is the same for all in like circumstances. To do less is to perform the first step in administrative suicide.

An administrator must make decisions and it is impossible to make decisions that please everyone. Time will not always permit the democratic prodess, one's committee is not always available, and the answer of yes or no often cannot wait. The observer--yes, even you- has 20-20 vision on hindsight. The leader may bat .900 but there are those who will remember only the times that he strikes out. But smile! Keep in shape for the next throw--whether a hard ball or a curve. Just hope it is not a "bean ball." Regardless of how one feels, he must play the game or give up the uniform. In the game of leadership, there are no substitutes to take one's place, only those who would fill his position. If you don't win, at least be a good loser. Once a decision has been made forget it. Do not waste time on issues that cannot be changed--it's like trying to make birth control retroactive.

Recognize that even the best administrator, including yourself, is prone to make some mistakes. Assume the impossible--that you are perfect. Despite this assumption, remember that it is generally predicted that at least five percent of the employees of an organization will be dissatisfied, regardless of the course of administrative action.

At the present time staffs of colleges are assuming that the allocation of decision-making responsibility is an inherent right of the faculty. If is believed by many that the position of the faculty is the same as those voters within a political state. They, as members of a faculty, are directly affected by policy decisions and they should have a vote in policy determination. There is a strong element of sound reason in this position. What is often overlooked is the fact that there is little opportunity for one to escape from decisions of the state and one had better participate. Although there is the responsibility of the faculty to share in the common interests of the college, the fact remains that one has the option to leave if dissatisfied.

Students, community, faculty and others have interests in the college. All are affected and should certainly keep aware of and participate to some extent in the policy making affecting the college, but training, experience, and previous success in decision-making sould be given some weight, even in a democratic process of problem solving.

On the campus today there is much talk of the intrusion of committee assignments for administrative problems and the need for the protection of the faculties' time for the academic. Not to be ignored is the literature about decision-making clearly stating that individuals make better decisions than do groups which serve their highest value in identifying the range of possible solutions. But finally, the leader must accept, reject, or decide to do nothing and at the final moment, this is a very singular decision.

The best administrator makes the ideas of others work more often than does he create them. By the very nature of his position, it is a mistake for the administrator to assume that he knows the attitudes of staff members. He is often the last to know! Most leaders attempt to be democratic in their relations with the staff in personal contact and in organizational development. Despite the shortcomings of committee action, people must be involved in the making of decisions. Opportunities must be provided for the faculty to be heard--individually and in groups. Some suggestions to administrators for improving communications are:

1. He could listen more carefully when he is with individuals or in groups. Most administrators do too much of the talking.

2. He should be available (preferably by appointment), and he should not hurry those who take the time to see him.

3. He should never hesitate to ask for advice or for opinions regarding how something might be done.

4. He should welcome sincere and constructive criticism even if is is not flattering--but he must expect that it be presented in a courteous manner.

5. If he has an open mind and really wants assistance, he could involve others in more decision-making. However, if he knows what must be done, he should not mislead by asking for advice.

6. Discussion of crucial problems and reasons for decisions before the total staff has a high relation to consensus of acceptance. He should encourage participation in discussion by staff members to increase the possibility of understanding.

7. Time is a dragon but when possible, he should keep open the discussion of crucial problems until consensus crystallizes.

8. He should be able to accept the recommendations and decisions of others to better his opportunity of success. (Success is measured by the responsible participation of others.)

9. He could try to involve and to utilize the abilities of individuals of the total staff. This calls for good internal leadership and the willingness of the administrator to recognize that he need not always be the chairman.

10. The fewer levels of administration and supervision the better. He should provide authority for decision-making as closely as possible to the individual concerned, but there should be enough individuals per supervisor to prevent too much supervision.

11. There may be a tendency to "go it alone" but the administrator should have integrity, professional competency, a sense of humor, and the ability to get people to work together.

12. He should involve faculty in curriculum development, agenda preparation for meetings, policy development, and budget preparation.

13. He should provide the opportunity for the one who asks a question to also propose a solution.

Probably one of the most widespread and pervasive forces causing change in the social structure and inner dynamics of a college is growth. What happens when size demands a change in the pattern of decision-making? How does the faculty react when the roles and statures assumed by the members of the "old time" faculty are challenged by sometimes better qualified new additions to the academic community? How does an institution bridge the gap when everyone is not "on the in"

regarding decisions and events relative to the institution? Why is it that communication seems to break down when an institution is undergoing rapid change?

Large institutions, whether they are corporate, governmental, military, or educational, are subject to the process of bureaucracy or formal organization. Power is diffused and face-to-face dealings are replaced by more formal and distant contacts. The risk of "institutional coronary" increases with size as a heavier load is placed on the heart which throbs and channels communication. At the time of growth and stress, when every person from the newest instructor to the most anemic dean must exert extra effort to open the veins of communication, "tired blood" is most often found.

A president is in a position to have the greatest information. Generally, communication moves downward. The problem is not only to attempt to transmit information but to develop understanding with communication. College faculties are not a unified group and good communication is necessary in the development of loyalty. Decisions must be made after the consideration of pertinent facts. These decisions should stand the scrutiny of the faculty, of the board, and of the community in general. If they can't, reevaluation is mandatory.

As an institution increases in size the demands of the leader are such that he spends most of his time with people. If care is not taken, it is too often with the same people--generally, with those in the administrative sphere. This reality has two drawbacks. First, independent meditative thinking is reserved to a "catch as catch can" basis. Second, the range of the professional "on the job" contacts becomes too restrictive. For careful and objective evaluations of his staff, the leader must avoid the restrictions of his contacts. A limited range of ideas is dangerous when often opinions of the staff are second hand.

No doubt, every institution falls short of its full capacity for effective internal communication. It would be extremely difficult to completely fuse the desires of the faculty (which ideally would result in their ultimately obtaining all that they would desire) and of the administrators who must make choices within the framework of the many communities which are served. Willingness of the public to finance a superior educational program must also be taken into consideration. If confronted with facts, the majority of the faculty and administrators are reasonable. While much has been done to improve written communication, an even greater effort must be exerted for improvement in "face to face" contact between top level administrators and faculty.

If has been said that the respective responsibilities of teaching and administrative faculties tend to foster different orientations. The apex of the college from the viewpoint of the faculty member is his class, then the department, the division, and then, perhaps the college. The responsibilities of the administrator orient him to make decisions in converse order. Inevitably there will be times when the solutions to problems will conflict as a result of these orientations.

While faculties are employed primarily to teach, and while administrators are engaged to carry out the policies of the college, faculties should be provided with the opportunity to advise in policy determination. Faculties should be limited to functions which they can perform effectively.

The college is not a unified group. Each professor is a member of many groups, and studies of faculties indicate that they often have more loyalty to the discipline of departmental sections than to the institution as a whole. It is important to be aware of the many groups in order that they can more effectively contribute to the college.

There are those who believe that the "organization man" is a spineless individual without initiative for creative thought. In reality, there is no point of attempting to be an administrator is one is not a "team man". Outstanding individuals 'stand out' on the team and can be more creative in leadership than the rebel. If one does not know how to relate himself to other peoples and situations he will not be in a position of leadership. It is often not what one does as much as how one does that insures success.

The higher up on the ladder of administration, the more exposed is the rear of the individual! His actions are more observed and his decisions affect larger numbers. The greatest threat to leadership is fear. Caution, deliberation, evaluation, action--yes, but procrastination and fear--no. How he stands up under fire is the real test of a leader. Does the heat "melt" or "temper" him?

The stronger the leader the easier it is for him to rely upon able assistants. His assistants gain strength when nourishment is given by providing a fair share of credit. Leadership is measured best by how well the organization survives in the absence of the top man, but too often or too lengthy absences do not permit a strong foundation.

In public office it takes longer to affect a change than in private enterprise. Don't move too fast. One is apt to slip! Remember to avoid the attitude of ownership. In a public institution of higher learning everyone is a stockholder. The "little things" are tripped over. Communicate--do things in such a way that your story may be proudly told.

No doubt, it is an over-simplification to classify leadership. However, generally it falls into designations of authoritarian and democratic. Authoritarian leadership is a one-man operation noted for delegation of responsibility without authority. It is paternalistic and it is usally found in a small or new institution. It provides avenues of comfort for those in administrative positions who do not want the responsibilities of leadership and who would "pass the buck".

Democratic leadership is noted for delegation of responsibility too, but with authority. When the work load becomes too heavy and decentralization becomes a necessity, this method is more apt to be used.

Good organizations result from pride in accomplishment but with the full realization that perfection is constantly sought and never attained. Never accept the philosophy that either you or your organization has "arrived." Strong traits which attract attention in the first place will not sustain one if they are not nourished as one develops. Do not be afraid to look for work and to improve yourself after finding the job.

No administrator actually believed that he "goofed" when he accepted the challenge of leadership. The many positive aspects of the position more than offset the

negative features.

The unfinished business of administration provides opportunity for a lifetime filled with exciting accomplishment. There is never a feeling of boredom; for as sure as one thinks that he has all wrapped into a neat little package, the string invariably breaks!

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

JAN 12 1970

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGES